



Ask Ursula

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Best-selling author and hypnotherapist, **Ursula James** answers your questions from three perspectives to help you progress on a spiritual, mental and physical level

“Overcome with grief”

My dad recently died from cancer, and I'm finding it hard to cope. Although I was with him in his last few days I'm feeling guilty for not answering his phone messages and emails in the past, and for not visiting him enough. I told him how sorry I was and how much I loved him when he was dying, but I don't know whether he heard me. I keep wishing I could see him and speak to him one more time. I'm constantly dwelling on this and finding it hard to move on. What can I do?

“IN SOME CULTURES A PLACE IS SET AT THE TABLE FOR THE DECEASED PERSON TO SHOW THAT THEY ARE STILL PART OF THE FAMILY”

Mind...

Accept your feelings

It is never easy when a parent dies, no matter how much you think you should be prepared for it. The most important thing to hold in your thoughts right now is the fact that the first few weeks are always the worst; your emotions will be all over the place, and all kinds of feelings will come into your mind. When a loved one dies you need to allow yourself at least three weeks for these extremes of emotion, and even then it takes around three months before you start to feel normal again. 'Moving on' as you put it, happens later. Right now, allow yourself the time and the space to think about your relationship with your father, and let all your thoughts and feelings come out. What will help is if you write these things down; by doing so you will start to appropriately disconnect yourself from the feelings, and, most importantly, you will be able to put them away for the time being. Place the written words somewhere safe with a nice photograph of your dad. In a few months, you can go back and read those words for the last time; you'll find that you feel differently after time has passed.

Body...

Take care of yourself

When someone close dies it is easy to then neglect yourself. Often people forget to eat, or drink too much as if in punishment for the fact that they didn't do what they 'should' have done for that person. But, the most important thing to remember now is the love you had for each other. Celebrate that love by doing all you can to look after yourself properly. In the first few weeks when you are in mourning, eat comforting but healthy food. Try to avoid alcohol as it will only depress you further. Meet up with others who cared about your father if you can, and have meals with them. Use this as a time to talk about him, and to remember him before he became ill. The ritual of sharing food is a very important one, and in some cultures a place is set at the table for the deceased person to show that they are still part of the family. Once three weeks is over, it is time to get out into the fresh air and walk. Run if you can. It is good at this time to tire yourself physically. It will help you to sleep better, and also to move on.

Spirit...

Perform a ritual

Celebrating the passing of a loved one is often forgotten in our fast-paced world. It is as if we have become so rational and practical that the whole process of mourning is ignored completely, and we are expected to act 'normally' almost immediately. We seem to have forgotten the importance of rites of passage. I feel it is very important to have a personal ceremony to celebrate your connection with the person who has died, and to create a new space in your mind to continue your relationship with them. If you shared a love of music, or of certain TV programmes or books or a hobby, you can keep your connection with your father through continuing these activities. If he enjoyed nature, plant a bush or a tree in the garden, or even in a pot indoors if you do not have space, and, when you are ready, place an object that would have had a meaning to him in the bottom of the pot. When I did something similar for a loved one of mine, I put a thimble and scissors into the pot. She had been a keen dressmaker and these were objects with which I associated her most in my memories.

Visit Ursula's blog at thebookoflightandshadow.com or follow her on twitter. Connect with Ursula on Facebook as she talks about her new book *The Source – a manual of everyday magic*. Note: not all letters or emails sent in to the experts will be answered; only those selected for publication.